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INTRODUCTION
1.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism, the most dynamic branch of the economies of the present time, involves the temporary shift of people from their normal place of residence, with an aim of relaxation or pleasure. Fundamentally an economic activity, tourism has emerged as a fast growing industry all over the world. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council’s 2016 ‘Report on the Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism Industry’ the total contribution of the sector to the global economy in 2015 was US$7.2 trillion (at 2015 prices) and 9.8 per cent of the world GDP. Tourism is not an isolated activity at present time, but a group of industries working together, complimentary to each other and spread over many sections of the society. Tourism generates employment opportunities and livelihood to millions and millions of people, creates foreign exchange, promotes and develops national integration, balanced regional development, rejuvenate the art and culture, melt down prejudices and suspicions that exist between different nations and enhance international peace. A marvellous achievement of tourism is that it creates a new job in every 10 seconds. One out of every nine persons earns their livelihood from tourism sector and one out of ten of the inhabitants of the world are tourists too. Serious studies are going on in this area because of its amazing growth as an industry and a major source of revenue for many countries. The rapid development of science and technology, communication network, development of sophisticated transportation system etc. go hand in hand with tourism development. In addition, the increase in disposable income due to the fast development of the economy becomes an influencing factor for the growth of tourism in the international scenario. The rapid growth of tourism is mainly a result of the increased demand for recreation and leisure. It is actually the outcome of economic development followed by scientific and technological revolution witnessed by the modern world. International tourist arrival across the globe had a rapid growth of 4.4 per cent in 2015 to reach a total of 1,184 million in 2015. It was the sixth consecutive year of above-average growth with international arrivals since the post-crisis year of 2010. More than 50 million
tourists (overnight visitors) travelled to international destinations around the world in 2015 than in 2014\(^2\). WTO’s study “Tourism 2020 Vision” forecasts that, 1.5 billion tourists will visit foreign countries annually by the year 2020 and will spend more than US $ 2 trillion or US $ 5 Billion every day\(^3\).

The significance of tourism to a nation’s economy has increased to such an extent that, it has sprouted numerous branches like medical tourism, hill tourism, monsoon tourism, wild life tourism, pilgrim tourism etc. With the passage of time, human mind’s ingenuity has resulted in exploring different areas /aspects of life that could be brought under the umbrella of tourism.

Pilgrim tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism in the world. In pilgrim tourism, the dimension of religion forms the basis of tourism by offering the reward of purification of the soul and attainment of objectives related to the problems of daily life. \(^4\) Pilgrimage, whether religious or secular, is experiencing resurgence around the world\(^5\). This includes the motives for pilgrimage, activities during the pilgrimage, and the influence of tourism on it. The features of present-day pilgrims can be represented on a scale that may be described as secular versus spiritual, and tourism versus pilgrimage. This typology also offers a model for the development of the pilgrimage sites. This highlights the increasing convergence of old-fashioned pilgrimage and current tourism, which have much in common.

Pilgrim tourism in India has reached unprecedented levels and forms an important part of domestic tourism. Although Hinduism continues to be the major religion in the country, India has been the birthplace of various major religions like Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. Moreover, there have also been Jewish settlements in India for nearly two thousand years. Parsees started moving to India twelve hundred years ago, to escape a less tolerant Iran. In the twentieth century, with the expansion of public transportation, there has been a vast increase in the numbers of people who go on pilgrimages. For many Indians, pilgrimage is still the preferred form of tourism.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The flow of income from tourism is amazingly high and is an indicator of the development scenario of Kerala. With a land area of just 1.17 per cent of the total
geographical area of India, Kerala provides a wide canvas for tourists from all over
the world. Thus in Kerala pilgrimage is a major part of its cultural tourism. Though
thousands of pilgrims had been visiting these centres from time immemorial, the
potential of these centres as tourist destinations had not been recognized properly
and very little effort had been taken to tap and market the potential of pilgrim
tourism so far. With the immense developments in the transport and communication
sectors, increase in the disposable incomes and various other reasons, the number of
tourists visiting these centres has multiplied over the years. But the tourists who
come to these destinations are seldom satisfied with the infrastructural and other
facilities as well as services provided to them. In order to reap full benefits from
pilgrim tourism, plans, policies and strategies have to be formulated at the
administrative level. Thus it becomes imperative to have a study evaluating the
current situation prevailing in the pilgrim centres across the state, the problems faced
by pilgrim tourists and host community as well as the prospects of pilgrim tourism
in the state of Kerala. Hence the present study “Pilgrim Tourism – An Evaluative
Study” was undertaken to have an assessment of the major pilgrim centres in Kerala.

1.3 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is very pertinent in the day to day scenario due to a host of
reasons. Pilgrim tourism provides a major source of earning to the national and state
exchequers. The tourism industry, and the pilgrim tourism in particular, benefits
various exchequers such as air travelling and shipping, banking and insurance, hotel
and luxury industry, public transport sector etc. It also contributes to the exchequers
in the form of different kinds of taxes besides providing revenue. It is a cardinal
source of employment. In addition to the generation of revenue and employment, the
sector is a powerful tool for promoting cultural exchange and international co-
operation. It is also a powerful catalyst for the preservation of our traditions,
customs, values and rituals. Last but not least in most of the countries pilgrim
tourism is considered as the cultural icon of the nation. In spite of the above
mentioned advantages, pilgrim tourism suffers from certain limitations and draws
numerous criticisms. In this context, the present study is significant as it sheds light
into the existing conditions prevailing in the selected pilgrim centres, the
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expectations of the pilgrims, and their opinion as to the impact of tourism on the socio, economic and ecological conditions.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Kerala, situated on the tropical Malabar Coast of South-Western India is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. Kerala tourism is built and developed in the strong foundation of attractive natural environment like backwaters, Ayurvedic health centres, wildlife sanctuaries, ecotourism, etc. Moreover the presence of cultural attractions like palaces, museums, festivals, pilgrim centres etc., are capable of increasing the density of tourist arrivals in Kerala. Kerala has a number of pilgrim centres of importance to Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains. Thousands of tourists visit these centres every year. Sabarimala, Guruvayoor Temple, Padmanabhaswami Temple, Bhimapalli, Parassinkadavu Temple, Malik Dinar Masjid, the Mother of God Cathedral, Mampuram Mosque, Chottanikkara Temple etc. are some of the famous pilgrim centres in the state.

Kerala tourism is a global super brand and regarded as one of the destinations with the highest brand recall. Kerala is a major tourist destination in South Asia. The most significant contribution of the Kerala tourism is the creation of employment in rural areas by stimulating local art, handicrafts and folklore. Tourism employs 10 per cent of total workforce and also contributes 5 million US Dollar annually as foreign exchange to the State (Economic Review, Government of Kerala).

Thousands of pilgrim tourists both domestic and foreign are visiting mosques, churches, temples both as a part of pilgrim and cultural tourism. In Kerala there are more than 3000 pilgrim centres. But these centres are not well known outside the state and the facilities available in these centres are hardly attractive to the tourists. Now the government of Kerala has decided to promote pilgrim tourism as a new product so as to exploit its potential in an effective manner. In this context, the present study is highly imperative and very relevant from the point of view of new tourism policy. A good understanding of the expectations and requirements of the tourists, the problems faced by them, the strengths and weaknesses of the pilgrim
centres and their potentialities will help the authorities to frame suitable policies in this regard. This study intends to make an analysis of the major pilgrim centres in Kerala from the perspective of the pilgrims and host community in respect of the facilities available in the centres, the cost factor, and the impact of pilgrim tourism on the economy, society and environment. The threats to the potential of pilgrim tourism and the various negative aspects of pilgrim tourism are also studied.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the factors that attracts potential tourists to pilgrim centres of Kerala
2. To evaluate the pilgrims’ opinion as to the cost of facilities / services provided in each of the pilgrim centres
3. To evaluate the functioning of DTPC and other agencies involved in the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala
4. To identify the problems encountered by the pilgrims while visiting the centres.
5. To evaluate the social, economic and environmental impact of pilgrim tourism from the perspectives of pilgrims as well as host community

1.6 HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H₀₁: There are no significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims regarding the factors attracting them towards the pilgrim centres

H₁₁: There are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims regarding the factors attracting them towards the pilgrim centres

H₀₂: There are no significant differences between number of pilgrims visiting the centres alone and in groups.

H₁₂: There are significant differences between number of pilgrims visiting the centres alone and in groups.
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\[ H_{03} \]: There is no association between number of people in groups and the pilgrim centres visited.

\[ H_{13} \]: There is association between number of people in groups and the pilgrim centres visited.

\[ H_{04} \]: There is no significant difference in the opinion of pilgrims visiting different pilgrim centres regarding the cost of facilities.

\[ H_{14} \]: There is significant difference in the opinion of pilgrims visiting different pilgrim centres regarding the cost of facilities.

\[ H_{05} \]: There are no significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims of different religions regarding costs of facilities.

\[ H_{15} \]: There are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims of different religions regarding costs of facilities.

\[ H_{06} \]: There are no significant differences between centres regarding costs of pilgrimage.

\[ H_{16} \]: There are significant differences between centres regarding costs of pilgrimage.

\[ H_{07} \]: There are no significant differences between religions regarding costs of pilgrimage.

\[ H_{17} \]: There are significant differences between religions regarding costs of pilgrimage.

\[ H_{08} \]: There are no significant differences between the centres with regard to the opinion of pilgrims on the responses of host community.

\[ H_{18} \]: There are significant differences between the centres with regard to the opinion of pilgrims on the responses of host community.

\[ H_{09} \]: There are no significant differences between religions regarding responses of host community towards pilgrims.

\[ H_{19} \]: There are significant differences between religions regarding responses of host community towards pilgrims.
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H$_{10}$: There are no significant differences between centres regarding problems faced by the pilgrims in reaching the destination.

H$_{110}$: There are significant differences between centres regarding problems faced by the pilgrims in reaching the destination.

H$_{11}$: There are no significant differences between religions regarding problems faced by the pilgrims in reaching the destination.

H$_{111}$: There are significant differences between religions regarding problems faced by the pilgrims in reaching the destination.

H$_{12}$: There are no significant differences between centres regarding development of sustainable tourism in Kerala through pilgrim tourism.

H$_{112}$: There are significant differences between centres regarding development of sustainable tourism in Kerala through pilgrim tourism.

H$_{13}$: There are no significant differences between religions regarding development of sustainable tourism in Kerala through pilgrim tourism.

H$_{113}$: There are significant differences between religions regarding development of sustainable tourism in Kerala through pilgrim tourism.

H$_{14}$: There are no significant differences between centres regarding provision of facilities at pilgrim centres.

H$_{114}$: There are significant differences between centres regarding provision of facilities at pilgrim centres.

H$_{15}$: There are no significant differences between religions regarding provisions of facilities at pilgrim centres.

H$_{115}$: There are significant differences between religions regarding provision of facilities at pilgrim centres.

H$_{16}$: There are no significant differences between centres regarding negative aspects of pilgrim tourism.

H$_{116}$: There are significant differences between centres regarding negative aspects of pilgrim tourism.
H17: There are no significant differences between religions regarding negative aspects of pilgrim tourism

H117: There are significant differences between religions regarding negative aspects of pilgrim tourism

H18: There are no significant differences between centres with regard to the opinion of host community on the economic developments induced by pilgrim tourism

H118: There are significant differences between centres with regard to the opinion of host community on the economic developments induced by pilgrim tourism

H19: There are no significant differences between centres with regard to the opinion of host community on the social developments induced by pilgrim tourism

H119: There are significant between centres with regard to the opinion of host community on the social developments induced by pilgrim tourism

H20: There are no significant differences between centres with regard to the opinion of host community on the environmental issues caused by pilgrim tourism

H21: There are significant differences between centres with regard to the opinion of host community on the environmental issues caused by pilgrim tourism

1.7 METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Nature of the Study

This study is an endeavour to evaluate the pilgrim tourism in Kerala. This study is empirical in nature and is about the conditions prevailing in the different pilgrim centres across the state of Kerala. The study is conducted from the perspective of pilgrims and the members of host community and hence it is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The study attempts to understand the perspective of the pilgrims regarding the facilities available in the centres, the cost...
of these facilities, the negative aspects of pilgrim tourism and also the respondents’ view as to the economic, social and environmental impact of pilgrim tourism

1.7.2. Unit of Study

Pilgrims visiting the religious centres have first-hand experience as to the facilities available there as well as the amount they have to spend on the various items of expenses. They are also eye witnesses to the effect tourism has on the economic and social life of the centres visited. The members of the local community- residents, hoteliers, taxi drivers, bankers etc. also experience the onslaught of tourism in their daily lives. Hence the pilgrims visiting the centres and also the members of the host community belonging to different trades are taken as the unit of study.

1.7.3 Sources of Data

The study relies on both primary and secondary data and was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, secondary data relating to tourism and pilgrim tourism in particular were collected from various published documents like Tourism Statistics of Government of India and Kerala, articles, booklets, brochures and other published documents related to the study.

In the second stage, primary data were collected using structured Interview schedules.

Both primary and secondary data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools so as to arrive at meaningful inferences.

1.8 METHOD OF PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Primary data for the study were collected from the pilgrims as well as the members of the local community. For this, two sets of structured Interview schedules were prepared. The interview schedules used for collecting the primary data were tested by the researcher before administering them.
1.8.1. Population

For the purpose of our study two categories of respondents were identified as the unit of study - (1) the pilgrims visiting the centres and (2) the members of host community.

Hence data were collected both from these two categories. And for the unit as identified as the pilgrim tourist, all the pilgrims visiting the selected tourist centre form the population while, the total of the residents, members of trading community etc. are taken as the population of the host community.

1.8.2 Pilot Study

Pilot studies were conducted using the structured interview schedules among 30 pilgrims and 30 members of host community. The researcher approached all the pilgrims and members of the local community considered for the pilot study. The information collected from them was studied in detail and necessary modifications were incorporated after discussing the same with experts in the field.

1.8.3 Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was employed and the state of Kerala was considered as three different zones, with three centres each from the selected zone. Random sampling was applied at the strata selected and equal representation of pilgrims or host community at each centres were ensured.

1.8.4. Sample Size

The sample size was determined through the use of Kukeran Formula. In this way data from 432 pilgrims (48 from each centre) and 270 members of host community (30 from each centre) has been collected.

Primary data has been collected from both the pilgrims and members of the host community. The data was collected from taxi drivers, hoteliers, merchants, vendors, volunteers, service personnel, and residents For this purpose nine pilgrim centres were selected in a purposive manner so that due importance to religious representation and geographical significance were considered. From these centres respondents were selected and data collected from them.
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To develop the schedule, existing literatures on tourism were reviewed and many experts in the field of tourism were consulted. Further, the researcher himself visited each of these centres twice before preparing the interview schedules. The preliminary draft of each interview schedule was pre-tested on 10 pilgrims and 10 members of the local community each from three centres. This helped in improving the interview schedule and also gave an indication as to which kind of responses that would be forthcoming. With a few deletions and additions, the final interview schedules were developed, which have been attached as Appendix 1 and 2. Some other important aspects essential for pilgrimage tourism such as service of transport personnel, hoteliers, attitude of natives and response of authorities, police and the other service personnel were also evaluated.

For collection of data the researcher visited each of the selected centres four to five times with a gap of at least three months so that different seasons and events were covered. In case of pilgrims visiting in groups, (family or otherwise), the interview schedule has been got filled only from one of the group members.

1.8.5 Data Analysis

The primary data made available from the responses of 432 pilgrim tourists and 270 members of host community was subjected to analysis using statistical tools. Mean scores of each sub variables were computed centre wise and religion wise for arriving at the perspective of pilgrim tourists regarding factors affecting choice of centres, costs at centres, responses of host community, problems faced in reaching the centre, prospects of sustainable tourism, level of satisfaction on infrastructural facilities provided by the authorities, service rendered or offered by DTPC or the religious bodies in connection with the promotion and the negative aspects of pilgrim tourism. The association and significant differences between centres or religions were determined using Chi-square test, ANOVA and eta squared wherever applicable. Besides data dimension reduction in the form of factor analysis was also employed to find out the principal components in the services rendered by DTPC or other religious bodies in connection with the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala.
The data collected from the members of host community was also analysed to arrive at the prospects and problems of pilgrim tourism in their perspective. The mean scores, ANOVA, eta Squared etc. were applied.

1.9 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

The following operational definition for the pilgrim tourist is applied for the purpose of the present study.

**Pilgrim Tourist**

“A pilgrim tourist is a planned tourist starting his journey on the strong foundation of religious beliefs and his aim is to attain salvation or change of mind or final asylum or transformation of mind by visiting a particular or series of holy places in his lifespan. The journey may be a single one or it is recurring in nature depending on the gravity of his beliefs. The end purpose or aim is to attain salvation or relief rather than leisure or enjoyment”.

1.10 CHAPTERISATION

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic of study, its background and states the problem identified along with scope and significance of the study. Besides, the methodology used for conducting the study, the sources from which data have been collected and the analytics as well as limitations confronted are stated.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter is devoted to the description of existing literature which has been reviewed for the purpose of identification of the research gap.

Chapter 3: Pilgrim Tourism and Centres in Kerala– An overview

This chapter describes the background of pilgrim tourism in Kerala and sketches out an outline of its present state.
Chapter 4:  Evaluation of Pilgrim Tourism in Kerala – The Pilgrims’ Perspective

The analysis of data collected from 432 respondents, 48 each from nine selected centres of pilgrimage are detailed in this chapter.

Chapter 5:  Evaluation of Pilgrim Tourism in Kerala – The Perspective of Host Community.

This chapter depicts the results and inferences of analysis of data relating to the responses of members of host community regarding the social, economic and environmental impact of pilgrim tourism on the local economy and its natives.

Chapter 6:  Summary of Findings and Conclusion

1.11  LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study confronted difficulties in the identification of research gap, since genuine literature on pilgrim tourism was limited. In spite of a wide range of studies available in the area of tourism, those focusing on pilgrim tourism especially in the state of Kerala had been few which had posed a major threat on the identification of the specific area to focus. Though this limitation was overcome by extensive survey of literature on pilgrim and religious tourism in other parts of the world, the study was not free from limitations in the areas of sample selection and data collection.

The most pertinent problem faced in sample selection and data collection was the seasonal nature of pilgrim centres. Festivals and special occasions relating to the religious practices at each centre attracted huge numbers of pilgrims to that centre during those occasions while some centres even remain closed during off seasons. This entailed repeated visits to centres, which the researcher had to undertake at the cost of time devoted for the study.

Yet another constraint which had to be overcome was the inadvertent resistance of the host community, the roots of which can be traced to the fear arising from un-accreditation to tourism development agencies. By ensuring the secrecy of identity, the researcher could tide over such issues in gathering bias free data.

In spite of all the limitations, every possible effort was taken to make the results of the study valid and reliable.
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